

# Lighthouse adds geriatric, substance abuse units

**BY KATHY ROPP**  
EDITOR

In response to community need the Lighthouse Care Center is adding two new services, and it's opening up its facility Friday to let the community come take a look.

An open house, which includes food and tours of the new acute geriatric psychiatric unit and the dual diagnosis alcohol and substance abuse unit, will be held from 10 a.m. – noon.

Elyssia Lowe, spokesperson for the Lighthouse Care Center of Conway, located at 152 Medical Park Drive, said the facility has revamped its offerings to meet the needs of the surrounding community.

The facility opened about five years ago as a residential treatment facility for troubled teens, male and female. The treatment facility also offered, and still does, acute adult psychiatric care.

However, the young girls who once were treated in Conway are now going to Berkeley County, and the boys' unit has been increased from 40 to 60 inpatients.

However, Friday's hoopla is dedicated to the new eight-bed geriatric unit, which has been open about six weeks now, and the alcohol and substance abuse unit, set to open any day now.

The facility is ready, waiting only for a walk through by state fire and Department of Health and Environmental Control officials. As soon as they place their stamp of approval on the program, the facility will begin accepting patients for the seven to 14 day program.

Lowe said the 24-bed unit will focus on substance abuse and mental illness because the two often go hand in hand.

Patients can admit themselves to the program or be admitted by a family member, if the patient agrees. Patients can be committed involuntarily if the courts determine they present a danger to themselves or others.

The purpose of this program is to stabilize patients and adjust any medications that they are taking so they can be transferred to longer-term rehabilitation programs.

When patients are stabilized, they are sent to Charleston or Wilmington for rehab.

"The push now is to get people out of inpatient as quickly as they can," Lowe said.

Patients are encouraged to join Alcoholics Anonymous or a similar program for narcotics abuse.

The Lighthouse expects to begin taking patients within hours of its final approval, which could be as soon as this week. Officials expect to get many of their referrals from Grand Strand, Loris and Conway emergency rooms.

They expect the unit to fill quickly once the community becomes more acquainted with the new service.

The geriatric unit opened Feb. 13 with eight beds. About four or five have stayed full since the unit opened under the watchful eye of program director of acute services Phyllis James.

James expects the numbers to pick up when more people learn about the individualized treatment at the center.

Lighthouse staff began planning for the new unit about three years ago, and hired 25 new staff members to make the program top notch.

The facility also got lots of renovations including everything from raising toilet seats to make it easier for the older patients to get up and down, to adding shower seats, lifters and electric beds that go all the way to the floor.

The program offers four psychiatrists, a medical director, two physician assistants, a nutritionist and a therapist.

James said the feedback she's gotten so far is the facility is doing a good job in most areas. It has also seen one area that needs a little more work, which is discharge planning. A director of social planning was added recently to improve that service.

The program is designed for older people who begin showing signs of anxiety, depression, dementia, Alzheimer's and other maladies that hurt their quality of life.

Facility staff works to make sure patients aren't overmedicated and to keep them comfortable, including assuring them a shower every other day and a sponge bath everyday. Patients are taken outside every day for a walk and chair exercises are part of the daily routine. In the future, staff hopes they may help the patients plant a garden.

Lowe said James offers hands-on supervision, treating the patients as if they were family.

"She's there a lot when I go back there. It's such a sweet feeling. You see

the staff sitting there as if they were with mom," Lowe said.

"It just warms my heart to talk about them. I love them," James said.

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**Henrietta Gamble, left, and Robin Bone  
test a patient at the Lighthouse Care  
Center's new acute geriatric psychiatric  
unit.**